

**Exeter Economic Development Commission**

**January 15, 2013**

**1. Call Meeting to Order**

Chairman Barry Sandberg convened the meeting at 8:06 a.m. in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Office building. Members present were: Selectman Dan Chartrand, Len Benjamin, Cynthia Tokos, Brandon Stauber, Jason Proulx, Lizabeth MacDonald, Madeleine Hamel and Town Manager Russ Dean. Also in attendance: Building Inspector Doug Eastman

**2. Approval of Minutes December 11, 2012 meeting**

Mr. Stauber moved to approve the draft minutes as presented; seconded by Mr. Benjamin. Motion to approve passed.

Prior to the start of the agenda items for this meeting, Mr. Sandberg polled the members present to verify the meeting date of the second Tuesday of each month was satisfactory; the response affirmed the meeting date. .

**Mr. Sandberg re-confirmed the meeting time will be the second Tuesday of each month until June when the meeting schedule could be re-visited; the start time remains at 8:00 am.**

**3. Town updates/announcements**

**Town Manager report:**

- Mr. Dean provided a brief summary of how the EEDC functions for the newest members: referenced the Visioning and Action plan and noted the Commission is moving into Phase 3.
- He is in contact with the UNH Whittemore School of Business to procure an intern to work with the Commission on ongoing projects; hopes to have in house by end of January.
- The Welcome Center, (the Baggage Building by the Train station) continues to move forward under the direction of Town Planner, Sylvia von Aulock. Following a response to an RFP and subsequent interviews, an architectural firm was chosen; presently in negotiation on fee and scope of project. Next step will be an appraisal of the property to enter into negotiations with owner on a final sale price.  
There is no design as yet; did see some conceptual drawings during the architects presentation. The intent is to keep it simple but improve the overall appearance of the building without losing the historical character of the 19<sup>th</sup> century building.
- Waldron Engineering continues to pursue the construction of a new facility on Holland Way. It is a large scale project that will be an economic benefit to the Town in the coming year.
- Al's Automotive Service is now operating on the Epping Road leaving the former building vacant with a For Sale sign on it. The Town has reached out to the owner and asked to be involved in any redevelopment plans for the property.

Mr. Stauber commented on a set of plans for the redevelopment of that area prepared in the 80's that did not come to fruition for one reason or another but thought it might be worth to view the plans in terms of how it might impact future development.

Mr. Eastman commented the Planning Office does have the plans on file and did agree it was a good design that focused on the redesign of the whole corridor in the Franklin/Clifford St. area.

(Mr. Eastman did procure the plans from his office and made them available for members to view following the meeting.)

Minutes approved at February 12, 2013 meeting

Further discussion determined the dual zoning in that area/either side of the street (Waterfront Commercial (WC) and Waterfront Commercial -1 (WC-1) can be an issue with the inequality of what is allowed/ required. Mr. Dean felt with the services a professional (or perhaps an intern) with experience in zoning issues might be brought in to look at the various zones and offer recommendations that might want to be considered; possibly using EEDC funds for the project.

Mr. Chartrand, citing instances of the inequalities of the existing dual zoning on either side of Water St., supported the idea to have a professional provide input to the EEDC and they report back to the Planning Board. Mr. Stauber added he would like to make the motion for the EEDC to create either an ad-hoc committee or assign the Executive Committee to start the process to inform themselves and then the Commission on what is the current status; then go through the process of choosing a professional to work with the ad-hoc committee who in turn would return to the full commission to review the findings to determine how to proceed. Mr. Chartrand seconded the motion for discussion.

The question was posed on a consultant focusing on one particular area and not all to determine the synergy between a larger area. Mr. Stauber re-iterated it was his intent to get a group familiar on the issues of this particular area and the existing challenges and then come back to the Commission for a recommendation to go forward with a professional. The space (the old Al's automotive building) is now available and perhaps the EEDC might want a say in its potential development. Upon questioning from the Chair, Mr. Stauber agreed to table the motion until later in the meeting.

Continuing, Mr. Dean restated the idea of adopting a downtown TIF district (Tax Incentive Financing) before development is put in place; the potential of redevelopment for the property on Chestnut St. and the TIF program for down-town improvements/updates. There is a process for adopting the program but ultimately it does require a Town vote and that opportunity only comes once a year. It is important the district be in place before any re-development occurs be it this year or in five years.

As for other communities with TIF districts, Newmarket and Durham, were cited and noted the TIF program is outlined on the Durham web site for review. Mr. Dean suggested the group look at the (Exeter) downtown improvement plans developed some years ago and determine if it still fits; could be viewed as reference documents. Ms. von Aulock did guide the Renovation Committee's efforts.

Mr. Chartrand stated one reason he chose to be the liaison between the BOS and the EEDC was to pursue tax development from the center out; feels a TIF is the only way to go. He added the Town has lagged in not investing in its downtown as have other surrounding towns have done i.e. Newmarket, Durham, Amesbury, Portsmouth and we are in competition with those towns. He is prepared to provide his full support to the adoption of such and is hopeful members individually and as a Commission will support the program.

Mr. Dean suggested a work session with a facilitator to help draw up such a plan. As for the Chamber being involved in such a process it was stressed their area of service extends beyond Exeter but will be in contact with them as any project develops.

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- As the Exeter/Stratham shared water/sewer services plan moves forward the BOS are considering the services of a consultant to look at the economics on the Town side of such a venture; still in discussion stage. The Town has entered into an administrated order of consent with EPA to build a new wastewater treatment facility with a projected cost of 36 to 45 million dollars. Various questions arise if there are more ratepayers to share in the costs, is there value in collaborating.

A limited discussion ensued on the potential issues coming with such collaboration. Exeter has opportunities for redevelopment; no longer has large open spaces suitable for development whereas Stratham does have development potential. It is a complex issue with some feeling there needs to be a way Stratham can contribute their fair share should such a venture go forth. Suggestion was to have a more structure discussion in this forum. Selectman Chartrand will be working more on this issue along with other members of the BOS and Town department heads.

- Lastly, the zoning amendment to rezone parcels fronting on Portsmouth Avenue from the High St. intersection up to the Walgreen's /Highland Ave. intersection has gone through the Zoning Review Ordinance Committee (ZORC) and the Planning Board. The public hearings were held and the amendment approved; will appear on the March Town warrant for voter approval. Mr. Eastman commented it is a residential change and doesn't pertain to any existing commercial entities. It is viewed as a start to expand the adoption of Form Based Codes. It was suggested a more formal presentation/explanation be made at the February meeting by Ms. von Aulock. (Also, to invite Sel. Julie Gilman to also come as she has worked extensively on this change to the current zoning.)

EEDC representation to ZORC was discussed so as to have an economic perspective represented. As to a next meeting of ZORC, Mr. Eastman replied with the drafting and approval of the proposed zoning changes complete for this year there are no scheduled meetings.

Mr. Stauber than asked to reword/amend his motion to request a new subcommittee be created to focus on the development opportunities within the Town. It would be a working group to research the issues and report back to the Commission on its findings for decisions on future actions. Mr. Chartrand amended his second to Mr. Stauber's motion.

The Chair summarized the motion that a subcommittee be added to the current core of standing working groups; to be a development committee to tackle new emerging issues within the Town. The leadership and membership of the working group is to be determined.

When asked for further discussion, Ms. Hamel felt these subjects were already identified as areas of work in the action plan as outlined in the 18 month – 2 year phase. Mr. Sandberg agreed but as part of other actions. He did verify with Chairmen Hamel and Stauber there was not a need to disband or re-organize their committees' work groups as there is an ongoing need for business retention and marketing.

Calling for the vote: **motion passed unanimously.** The Chair will work with Mr. Dean in structuring the group and asked if any members wished to be a part of the subcommittee to contact him.

- **375<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration**

Mr. Chartrand had no report from Ms. Gilman who is heading the committee.

#### **4. Discussion of 2013 priorities**

Mr. Sandberg reviewed what he heard as actions for the coming year; formation of a new subcommittee, a February presentation on Form Based Codes and continuing work by the standing work groups.

Ms. Hamel asked if the creation of an Economic Development chapter for the Town Master Plan was not to be a continuing action. Discussion followed on was the Commission ready to undertake such an endeavor. Although the Executive Committee did agree to pursue the topic, Mr. Sandberg had conversations with Planning Board representative, Kathy Corson and Ms. von Aulock who both indicated they did not have the resources to work with the EEDC at that time; development of such a chapter is a PB function and he was unsure if the EEDC was ready to take on that function in 2012. Discussion continued on what level of resources the group wished to commit to the process.

Mr. Dean offered although the Town MP does not have a chapter dedicated to Economic Development the present plan does have a series of notations and strategies toward what could/should happen in different areas of Town; contained in Chapter 2 under Land Use. However, he felt it would be doable to create a shell document to refer to the basics of an economic development plan; might be an assignment for intern.

Ms. Hamel and Mr. Stauber continued the discussion on the needs and purpose of having a structured approach/document with goal setting and action steps to focus on what the group wants to keep working toward. Mr. Sandberg outlined what he felt were the differences between a document that becomes part of the Master Plan and a working document; volunteered as a member of the Executive Committee he will see that it is addressed and have a plan in place.

#### **5. Activities of Standing Committees**

- Ms. Hamel, Chairman of **Business Retention and Expansion** work group stated they are in the second round of their business outreach project. Introductory letters have gone out; will start calling the businesses to make appointments.
- Mr. Stauber, Chairman of the **Branding and Marketing** work group met and discussed plans for 2013 that included continuing work on web site, business profiles and the need to develop EEDC initiatives to be promoted on web site; are looking forward to the services of an intern and would welcome additional members to join the group.

#### **6. February 12, 2013 meeting agenda**

Mr. Sandberg recapping: he will be in contact with Ms. Gilman and Ms. von Aulock to do a presentation on Form Based Codes, compose a grid for 2013 priorities, follow up on the newly created Development subcommittee and provide time for a report-back on the Chamber's Economic Forum 2013 with Dr. Ross Gittell set for January 23, 2013.

#### **7. Adjournment**

Mr. Chartrand moved to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Benjamin. Meeting adjourned at 9:35 a.m.  
Respectfully submitted,

Ginny Raub, Recording Secretary